

Interpretive Activities

Aactively participate and help in two interpretive naturalist-led events, and attend four other similar events. You might help set up for an evening program, ammounce programs, or explain a stop while on a nature hike. Please arrange your participation ahead of time with the interpretive naturalist.

Identification

You should be able to identify at least 7 things from at least 3 of the groups listed below. (Identify a total of 21 things.)

Wildflowers	Plant galls	Amphibians
Ferns	Reptiles	Fungi
Insects	Birds	Weed seeds
Fish	Constellations/stars	Shrubs
Mammals	Trees (bark, buds or leaves)	Rocks/ minerals

Ecological Understanding

You should be able to explain the following terms to the interpretive naturalist in your own words(see below and at right):

Predator	Food Chain	Producer
Prey	Habitat	Consumer
Ecology	Parasite	Decomposer

Upon completing these requirements, you will be awarded a Hoosier Ecologist Patch and Certificate. There is no time limit for completion of the Hoosier Ecologist Program.

Food Chains

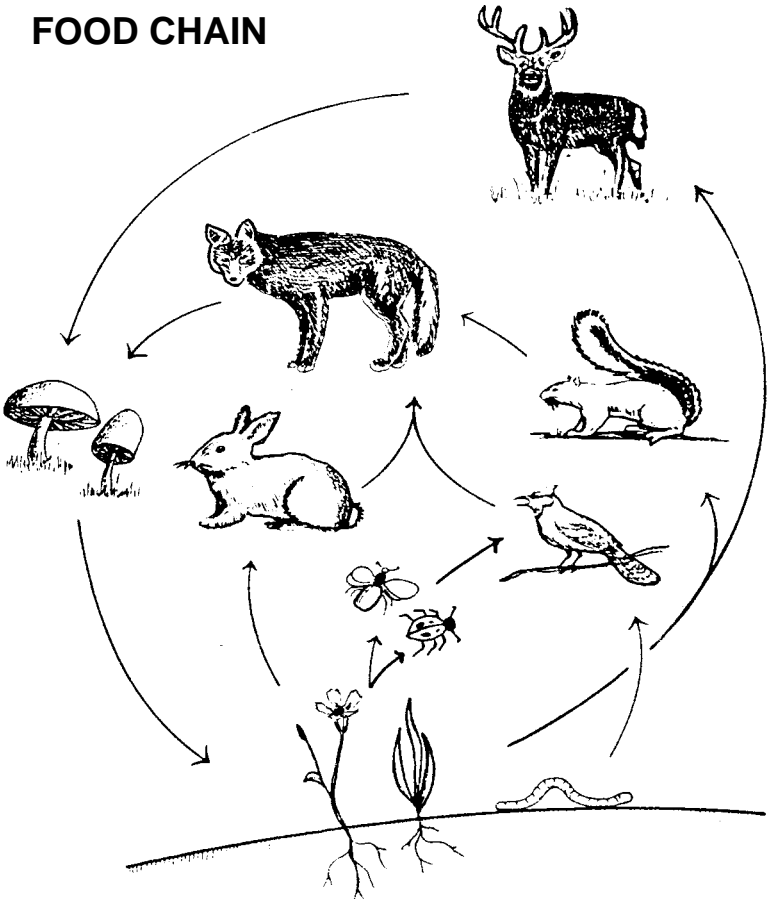
The diagram at right is an example of a **food chain** that can be found in nature. It shows how everything that is living depends on other living things for food. Many different food chains can be found in rivers, lakes, fields and forests. Do you see why this is called a “chain”? All the links are connected. What would happen if one link in this chain were removed? Can you think of other animals that might be part of this chain? Where do you fit in this food chain?

The study of plants and animals and how they fit into these food chains is called **ecology**. Ecology is the study of how plants and animals relate to their environment, including the water, air and land around them. Where a plant or animal lives and how much food, water, shelter, space and light it requires is called its **habitat**.

All green plants produce their own food using sunlight, carbon dioxide gas and water, and are called **producers**. You can see by the food chain that all animal life depends on plants for food, either directly or indirectly.

Animals cannot make their own food, but must eat plants or other animals. They are called **consumers**. Are you a producer or a consumer? Consumers that eat smaller animals are called **predators**. The animals they eat are called **prey**. (In this food chain, a rabbit is the prey and a fox is the predator.) A **parasite** is a plant or animal that gets its food by living off of another creature, called its host. For example, a tick is a parasite on a dog (the host.) Parasites don’t always kill their hosts.

FOOD CHAIN



After plants and animals die, they are slowly turned back into soil by **decomposers** such as mushrooms(fungi) and bacteria, which are too small to see. Decomposers are called nature’s garbage disposal! What would happen if there were no decomposers?



PARK PATCH PROGRAM

- Smokey's Friends
- Junior Naturalist
- Hoosier Ecologist

The Interpretive Services for the Division of State Parks and Reservoirs offers many programs for understanding natural resources conservation. One of these programs is Park Patch, which offers something for each age level and is progressive in educational value and difficulty.

Each level may be completed in just a few days, or the activities may be spread over several property visits. Work may be started and finished on one property, or may be done in different parks. The service time and interpretive naturalist activity sections can also be completed at participating state reservoir properties.

Upon successful completion, you will be awarded a certificate and a patch, available only at state park properties. (Reservoir properties have a separate patch program.)

Join us to discover more about the world around you and the properties you love to visit. Contact the Interpretive Naturalist at your favorite property and get started today!

DNR  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
Division of State Parks and Reservoirs  
Interpretive Services

# Smokey's Friends



Smokey's Friends is a beginning nature program for 5-7 year olds. See an interpretive naturalist for an activity card and complete details. You must fulfill all of the following requirements:

- Spend one hour of service time helping around the property.
- Color the Smokey Bear coloring sheet.
- Tell any three things that Smokey Bear might say.
- Attend at least three interpretive activities.
- Point out and identify two things in the forest, such as trees, plants, birds and animals.

Upon completing these requirements, a small Smokey Bear patch and a certificate of completion will be awarded. There is no time limit for completing the Smokey's Friends Program.

# Junior Naturalist Program



Anyone age 8-up may participate in the Junior Naturalist Program. See an Interpretive Naturalist for your card and instructions. You must fulfill all of the following requirements:

## Service Project

Devote 3 hours of service to a DNR property. The interpretive naturalist will assign your project.

## Nature Study Project

With the assistance of the interpretive naturalist, choose a living thing to investigate and discover:

- What does your plant or animal eat, what might eat it. What happens to it after it dies?
- What would happen if every one of your plants or animals disappeared?
- Explain why plants and animals need each other.
- Describe your plant or animal, if possible, by smell, touch and sound.
- Draw a picture of your animal in a scene depicting its natural habitat. Include other plants and animals that may affect or be affected by your plant or animal.

## Naturalist Activities

Attend five interpretive activities.

## Identification

Identify any ten of the following:

Reptiles	Amphibians	Ground plants	Insects
Trees	Mammals	Birds	Spiders

Any combination, such as 5 trees, 2 birds, 1 ground plant, 2 reptiles, etc., is acceptable. Bring a list of what you have learned to the interpretive naturalist, who may quiz you out on the trail, with museum displays, pictures or slides.

Upon completing these requirements, you will be awarded a Junior Naturalist Patch and Certificate at an evening program. There is no time limit for completing the Junior Naturalist program.

# Hoosier Ecologist Program



The Hoosier Ecologist Program is an advanced nature study program for those who have completed Junior Naturalist. Your work will be assigned/ supervised by an interpretive naturalist. You must fulfill the following requirements:

## Ecology Service Project

Devote a minimum of 3 hours of service on special property projects. The Interpretive Naturalist will assign these.

## Research Project

Observe a part of the outdoor world that is of particular interest to you. You may design your own project, as long as it has been discussed with the Interpretive Naturalist. Submit a written record of results and observations and discuss the project with the interpretive naturalist. Examples include:

- Observe a bird or mammal for a given period of time. Record its actions, interactions with other species and feeding habits.
- Observe a flower for a period of time. Keep a record of insects or animals visiting it. Why are they there? Why do some avoid this plant?
- Make a weed seed collection and label each item. How do they travel? Why are they important?
- Choose a mushroom or fungus to observe. Keep a record of its development and deterioration.
- Observe life in a square meter of forest floor, old field, etc. Record observations and living things seen in the square.
- Compare two totally different habitats, such as a field and a forest or a cave and a lake. How do they differ? What plants and animals are found in each one? Record temperature/light differences.
- Sit in the forest or quiet natural area for one hour at night or in the early morning. Record all of the sounds and sights and your thoughts while you are in this setting.

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